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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Language and Culture as The Seventh Warfighting
Function

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DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT

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PREFACE

The impetus for this thesis is based upon a call for this topic to be argued for or against by the staff at the Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) and the author's personal interest in the topic after having spent the past twenty years serving as a member of the Marine Corps intelligence community as an active duty Marine and Department of Defense civilian. The topic centers on the importance of cultural awareness and language familiarization in the Marine Corps. The central question posed by the CAOCL is that since a warfighting function aids in unity of effort and focuses Marine Corps planners, would the establishment of language and culture as the seventh warfighting function ensure language and culture is integrated into all operational and strategic planning efforts? The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Kerry Fosher, Cultural Anthropologist, from the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity for her insight and expertise in assisting me to scope this issue. The author would also like to thank my family for support they have all provided during the past year, while attending the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. The author would also like to thank both the leadership at my parent command, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, for their trust and confidence in my abilities, and the men and women of the Operations Division for all their hard work during my absence. Without their support, none of this would be possible. Lastly, a special acknowledgement to Mr. Carl "Chip" Loos, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Marine Corps Forces Africa, who was the driving force behind my decision to attend the Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

Executive Summary

Title: Language and Culture – the Seventh Warfighting Function

Author: Mark A. McRae, Government Civilian

Thesis: Instead of implementing a seventh warfighting function, the Marine Corps should continue to build upon the doctrinal shifts within the current planning process, create Culture Operators through implementing regional Marine Expeditionary Forces, continue to leverage technology to deliver language and culture across the Marine Corps and continue to build the bridge into the anthropology and social science communities to ensure that language and culture are embedded in the planning process, as well as in the hands of the individual Marine.

Discussion: The Marine Corps will continue to operate in environments where Marines will need the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to operate successfully in a foreign country. Should the Marine Corps create a seventh warfighting function to ensure that language and culture are imbedded in the planning process and provide the necessary knowledge to the individual Marine? As far back as the days of the *Small Wars Manual*, the information requirements associated with language and culture fell upon the shoulders of the intelligence discipline. The Marine Corps will not only require culture knowledge, but will also require a mindset seasoned in Operational Culture to influence the outcome of military operations.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps has made great strides in ensuring that the operating forces have the doctrine, tactics, techniques, procedures and tools available to remain relevant as our nation's force in readiness. There are both positive and negative aspects in creating a seventh warfighting function. However, based upon the implementation of the Training & Readiness Manual for Language and Culture, the efforts of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning to

provide critical training to the force during pre-deployment, the service intelligence center's capability and capacity to provide timely and relevant cultural intelligence to the operating forces, the distance learning efforts of the Marine Corps' Training and Education Command regarding language and career regional studies across the Marine Corps and the recommendation to create Culture Operators through the creation of regional Marine Expeditionary Forces, the Marine Corps should not seek to create a seventh warfighting function.

I. INTRODUCTION

Planning is thus a way of figuring out how to move from the current state to a more desirable future state—even if it does not allow us to control the transition precisely... This means contemplating and evaluating potential decisions and actions in advance. It involves thinking through the consequences of certain potential actions in order to estimate whether they will bring us closer to the desired future.¹

For the foreseeable future, the Marine Corps will continue to operate in environments where an operational imperative exists where each Marine will need some level of knowledge, understanding and skills on the foreign country's culture and native language. General Krulak initiated a concept in which Marines would possess the capability and mental acuity to perform combat operations, provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and peacekeeping operations, all within a three-block radius.² To operationalize the "three block war"³ concept successfully, planners and operators will need to factor the cultural impact and the ability to mitigate language barriers into their planning and subsequent operations.

Throughout the history of the Marine Corps, Marines have deployed into foreign lands under a variety of circumstances, oftentimes with little to no advanced warning. These minimal advance warning deployments are an integral part of Marine Corps history. The Commandant of the Marine Corps articulated in *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* that Marines will continue to be called by the Nation to respond rapidly to crisis with little warning.⁴ The Marine Corps should investigate the merits of creating a seventh warfighting function to ensure the integration of language and culture into the planning process and the development of a complimentary resident capability and capacity in the individual Marine's toolbox. The integration of language and culture into the planning process to assist in preparing Marines to

deploy into the next austere environment will bring depth of understanding to the planning process and enable Marines to operate across the full spectrum of conflict in an ever-changing environment.⁵

This paper will analyze the issue of whether the Marine Corps should create a seventh warfighting function for language and culture. The creation of a seventh warfighting function has the potential to achieve additional synergy in the planning process and subsequent mission execution. Although the creation of a seventh warfighting function has the potential to achieve additional synergy in the planning process and subsequent mission execution, a seventh warfighting function should not be implemented. Instead of implementing a seventh warfighting function, the Marine Corps should create Culture Operators through the implementation of regional Marine Expeditionary Forces, continue to build upon the doctrinal shifts within the current planning process and doctrine, continue to leverage technology to deliver language and culture across the Marine Corps and continue to build the bridge into the anthropology and social science communities to ensure that language and culture are embedded in the planning process, as well as into the hands of the individual Marine. Marine Corps competency regarding language capability and capacity, as it relates to the individual Marine and the planning process is a relatively straightforward issue. The Marine Corps has a longstanding language capability that exists within each of the Intelligence and Radio Battalions, as well as members of the Foreign Area Officer community. The existing language capabilities within the Marine Corps are able to provide context and make recommendations during the planning process. In addition to the pre-existing capabilities, the Marine Corps has instituted sweeping changes to open more opportunities for each individual Marine to develop a foreign language skill of choice. Conversely, ensuring culture is imbued within the planning process and the individual Marine is

a more complicated concept to integrate, relative to language. Through personal experiences and the concepts defined in this paper, the average Marine's understanding of culture would likely fall between the categories of information/consideration and knowledge, as depicted by Wunderle.⁶ Wunderle's pyramid regarding culture ranges from consideration (how and why), knowledge (specific training), understanding (advanced training) and competence (decision-making and cultural intelligence).⁷ Understanding the overarching concept of culture is insufficient to effectively conduct campaign planning. Marines responsible for campaign planning and subsequent execution of military operations need to develop an understanding of the cultural landscape and the impact operations will have across the cultural landscape, as well as understanding how the cultural landscape will impact operations. Based upon this understanding, planners should analyze the affects and propose recommended measures of mitigation to attempt to strike a balance between achieving the military objective and the potential disruptions caused across the cultural landscape. Culture as it relates to Marine Corps planning should be viewed through two distinct dimensions of "culture" and "operational culture." Culture and operational culture are separate but complimentary topics and have distinct implications when conducting campaign design and subsequent planning. Building cultural knowledge and developing the ability to navigate the cultural landscape are both integral aspects of the future planning environment. As such, a definition of culture and operational culture are offered to further the analysis of this thesis.

II. Defining Culture and Operational Culture

Eriksen utilizes E. B. Taylors definition of culture from Taylor's book *Culture* as "Culture or civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which

includes knowledge , belief, art, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”⁸ *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* clarifies culture as “The shared world view and social structures of a group of people that influence a person’s and a group’s actions and choices.”⁹

Colonel Bore defined operational culture based upon a discussion with the former director of the Ecole Militaire Spécialisée dans l’Outre-Mer et l’Etranger (EMSOME) as “the understanding of foreign cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes: it is an operationally relevant field guide used by general officers as well as infantry squad leaders to navigate a complex human terrain.”¹⁰ Complimentary to this description of operational culture, Holmes-Eber and Salmoni define it as “Those aspects of culture that influence the outcome of a military operation; conversely, the military actions that influence the culture of an area of operations.”¹¹ Additionally, Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, puts forth the view that operational culture is partly based upon dimensions that represent the impacts that may be imposed through the conduct of military operations: the physical, economic, social, beliefs and symbols within a foreign country.¹² Is there a dividing line between culture and operational culture as it relates to military operations? What are the impacts on military operations regarding culture and operational culture as defined?

The mere introduction of a military force within a foreign culture begins to either develop a positive or negative impact within that culture. There is a dividing line between the study of culture and applying a thought process of operational culture within an operating environment, as it relates to the introduction of a military force. Culture is a semi-static topic, in that the information gleaned by an operator or planner is encyclopedic¹³ in nature. Culture is the knowledge and understanding desired as a precursor to the conduct of planning and subsequent

operations. The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) and the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) produces a series of handbooks, smartcards, and field guides designed to provide the culture context where Marines and other members within the U. S. Government may find themselves deployed. MCIA and CAOCL product lines provide a snapshot of the operational to tactical cultural landscape, as well as a country overview.

Operational culture is the in-depth understanding of the potential impacts that the introduction of Marines within the cultural landscape will have once introduced. The moment the extension of political power is introduced within the landscape, it begins to disrupt the existing culture. Dependent upon the rigors applied within the planning process, the impacts across the cultural landscape may be dramatic. Although the previously described products provide a range of cultural context to a potential operating environment, neither product line is able to provide insight into how military operations may disrupt the environment or how the military's presence and actions may convert an ally within the culture into an adversary. The manner in which the force is introduced, its density and size, determines the intensity and range of affects on the people, which are certain to follow. The determining factor is thus the intellect and intuitive thinking, using the operational culture model, of the campaign planners and the commanders responsible for executing and directing operations. Inclusive to the concept of operational culture, which needs to be accounted for regarding the range of military operations, are those impacts as a result of operating in a coalition structured environment. In the future, Marines are likely to conduct operations within a bilateral or multilateral organizational structure. *Joint Publication 3-0* codifies this important aspect of the multinational operating environment:

“Each partner in multinational operations possesses a unique cultural identity - the result of language, values, religion, and economic and social outlooks. Language

differences often present the most immediate challenge. Information lost during translation can be substantial, and misunderstandings and miscommunications can have disastrous effects.”¹⁴

The concepts of culture and operational culture are at the forefront of the future operating environment. In spite of the necessity for culture knowledge and operational culture, Marine Corps doctrine does not clearly define culture and operational culture in the requisite documents that affect planning. Although the specific country where Marines may be deployed in the future is unknown, a series of governing documents provide insight into the future operating environment, where an understanding of planning considerations relative to culture and operational culture is relevant.

III. Future Marine Corps Operating Environment

As the nation’s amphibious force in readiness, Marines are likely to deploy primarily within the littoral regions of the world. The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity’s (MCIA) *Marine Corps Long Range Threat Assessment* portrays the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Africa as three regions where the likelihood of involvement by Marine forces is high. Additionally, MCIA indicates a moderate to low likelihood for involvement in Latin America and Europe-Eurasia, respectively.¹⁵ MCIA further assesses that by 2050 the world population is expected to increase by 2.5 billion, with most of this growth in the least developed regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.¹⁶ *The Joint Operating Environment: Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force* portrays a capstone description for the future operating environment:

“The current demographic trends and population shifts around the globe underline the increasing importance of cities. The urban landscape is steadily growing in complexity, while its streets and slums are filled with a youthful population that has few connections to their elders. The urban environment is subject to water scarcity, increasing pollution, soaring food and living costs, and labor markets, in

which workers have little leverage or bargaining power. Such a mixture suggests a sure-fire recipe for trouble.”¹⁷

Utilizing the African continent as a model for the potential involvement of Marines in the future, it is of significant note that MCIA has projected that by 2025 roughly 40 percent of the world’s population will live in Sub-Sahara Africa, which comprises 2,000 languages embedded within 500 ethnic groups.¹⁸ As the continent consists of an extensive littoral environment, the Marine Corps can expect its forces to be deployed within the sub-Sahara region in the future. MCIA has predicted that the potential roles and missions that the Marine Corps’ expertise will be relied upon are: Theater Security Cooperation/Building Partner Capacity, Maritime Interdiction Operations, Humanitarian Assistance [Disaster Relief], Civil Affairs Operations, De-Mining and Weapons Eradication, Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Operations and the ever-present potential Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations.¹⁹ Each of the potential Marine Corps roles and missions will require close contact with and, to some degree, reliance upon the indigenous people to assist in the achievement of U. S. military objectives.

Currently, Marine Forces Africa is involved in the planning and subsequent execution of Africa Partnership Station 2010 (APS-10), an international security cooperation effort to improve maritime safety and security in Africa. The APS-10 organizational structure includes over 70 international officers and senior enlisted personnel, with a senior staff of 21 officers and enlisted from ten countries in the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa Region, with Cameroon and Gabon as countries APS-10 forces will engage with during the deployment. In the conduct of operations in Cameroon or Gabon, it is inevitable that Marine forces will come in contact with various members of different ethnic groups, with a potentially different set of values, beliefs and social structure. The potential impact of the introduction of military forces on a particular ethnic group is not readily apparent without study of the group’s culture and the

implementation of the operational culture model during planning and operations, to achieve a positive impact across the operating environment. The military services have created new capabilities and built upon existing capacities to provide cultural knowledge to the respective force to assist in building the knowledge base as it relates to culture. However, this thesis will focus on the capabilities and capacities within the Marine Corps that have been recently implemented or pre-existed and are enhancing operators and planner's ability to build expertise related to language and culture.

IV. Current Capability and Capacity within the Marine Corps

Since the onset of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the issue of cultural knowledge has attracted significant attention throughout the Department of Defense. The Marine Corps' Service Intelligence Center and the Training and Education Command have had the greatest impact across the operating forces regarding capability and capacity as it relates to developing language skills and culture based knowledge. The combination of the capabilities and capacities inherent in both MCIA and the Training and Education Command have been able to produce a range of products that sustain the force in achieving the Marine Corps endeavors to develop a language capability, cultural knowledge and a operational culture mindset across the force.

Service Intelligence Center

The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, as the service intelligence center, has and maintains a series of language and culture product lines in support of the operating forces. The product lines are produced by regionally aligned teams within the command. In addition, MCIA has a Cultural Anthropologist and Social Scientists on staff, which brings years of regional experience, analytic depth and rigor to the analysis process in the resulting products. The

Cultural Generic Information Requirements Handbook (C-GIRH) provides an excellent source of information requirements which may provide context to the planning process as well as operations ashore. MCIA defines cultural intelligence for its product line as “the analysis and understanding of groups of people and the reasons they do the things they do...is not a list of “do’s and don’ts.”²⁰ The C-GIRH further clarifies cultural intelligence as an understanding of the mind set of local populations which supports the commander’s decision-making and helps drive operations.²¹ A significant product produced by MCIA, which is tailored for the Marine Expeditionary Unit deployment, is the *Deployment Intelligence Forecast*. This document provides insight across each of the Geographic Combatant Command’s areas of responsibility where the MCIA assesses the likelihood for the introduction of Marine forces, during the unit’s deployment. This document is prepared and presented to the unit’s principle staff members a minimum of one year prior to the unit’s deployment, to allow the unit commander the opportunity to assess the unit’s preparedness from a language and cultural perspective and tailor subsequent training prior to deployment. Linking the Deployment Intelligence Forecast with the Operational Culture and Language Training and Readiness (T & R) Manual provides a defined direction for the unit commander in determining where to focus training related to language and culture. Additional product lines produced and disseminated by MCIA are the *Cultural Intelligence Indicators Guide*, *Cultural Field Guides*, *Culture Smartcards* and *Low-Level Atmospherics*.

Training and Education Command

The Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), as an element of the Training and Education Command, provides a series of mobile training team events in support of Marines undergoing their pre-deployment training planning cycle. The center’s associated

product lines contain language training as well as cultural awareness training. Additionally, CAOCL provides a handbook series titled *Operational Culture for Deploying Personnel* to assist Marines in developing knowledge and understanding of the operating environment from a cultural perspective. CAOCL develops and provides *Regional Studies Programs*, *Operational Culture Professional Military Education* and *Communication Skills* training across the force. The CAOCL maintains Regional Desk Officers in support of Marines deploying into the Pacific, Central, Southern/Northern and Africa Geographic Combatant Command's Areas of Responsibility. The CAOCL is staffed with personnel from the Anthropology and Social Sciences communities as well as a compliment of native language speaking professionals and area experts. The Research Centers or libraries throughout the Marine Corps are also available to the individual Marine seeking to develop their knowledge and understanding of a foreign culture.

The Marine Corps has also implemented a distant learning capability for Marines to hone and sharpen their language skills in garrison or while deployed. This online technology partnered with Rosetta Stone language packages provides an unprecedented capability for Marines to build or maintain their language skills on demand. In addition to this on-demand environment created by the introduction of *MARINENET*, there are also 20 Marine Corps bases with Learning Resource Centers where Marines may go to learn if they do not possess a personal computer. For those Marines in the operating forces that are deployed onboard ship or remote locations, the Marine Corps has made available Deployable Resource Centers. A hardware suite based capability to allow Marines to continue to learn while they are deployed away from their garrison locations.

Lastly, Marine Corps Order 3500.65: Operational Culture and Language Training and Readiness (T & R) Manual provides a standardized core capability mission essential tasks for

readiness reporting and required training events and standards for the operating forces that will interact with individuals from other cultures.²²

The Marine Corps has made significant strides in developing cultural and language expertise across the force. However, providing additional clarity and implementing additional building blocks within the doctrine may further the process of developing language and culturally savvy Marines, to achieve the desired results in the planning process and subsequent mission execution. The current *Marine Corps Planning Process* document lacks clarity in defining culture and its relationship to planning. The document also does not provide a readily apparent process of inputs and outputs throughout the planning process for cultural considerations that may affect what is promulgated in the operation order or the outcome of the operation. Neither the *Marine Corps Supplement to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Term* nor the *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* contain relevant definitions for culture or operational culture as it relates to the planning process. The language and Regional Studies Programs require a closer look regarding the future assignment of Marines that have begun the process of building regional expertise, as it relates to the issue of “homesteading.”²³

V. Analysis of Creating a Warfighting Function

The Marine Corps’ six warfighting functions of logistics, command and control, fires, maneuver, intelligence and force protection have stood the test of time, providing the Marine Corps a standardized method of planning and campaign execution to achieve the strategic objectives assigned by the Commander-In-Chief. These six functions provide cohesion within the planning process to ensure that the campaign design is sufficient to achieve the goals and that

the necessary elements are in place to assist the commander in his or her decision making throughout the campaign. *Campaigning* describes this as synergy: “The conduct of a successful campaign requires the integration of many disparate efforts. Effective action in any single warfighting function is rarely decisive in and of itself.”²⁴ The criticalities of these functions are readily apparent. How did the Marine Corps come to recognize these six functions as the key components to achieve synergy in the planning process? The creation of a new warfighting function is not an easily identifiable process, but would be initiated through the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC).

The concept or process of creating a warfighting function within the Marine Corps is nebulous at best. Through research and discussions with personnel within the Marine Corps, it appears as though there is no documented process for the creation of a warfighting function. Although the process for creating a new warfighting function may not be clearly defined, the development and adoption of the current six warfighting functions within the Marine Corps were a direct result of the review and restructuring of the 1979 edition of FMFM 3-1: *Command and Staff Action*, to better support the decision making by the commander.²⁵ Although the naming conventions may have changed over time, it appears that these functions date at least back to the days of the *Small Wars Manual*. The warfighting functions have evolved over time based upon the experiences of the Marine Corps in war, throughout its history. It was originally thought that the Marine Corps adopted its six warfighting functions from Army doctrine. However, through discussion and research, it appears that the Marine Corps was the first of the military services to utilize these functions in the conduct of campaign planning and execution. The *Small Wars Manual* identifies what are now known as the current warfighting functions in chapter II, “Organization”, section II, “The Staff in Small Wars” and in chapter VI, “Infantry Patrols”

section VI, "Reconnaissance and Security". Additionally, the manual discusses culture as a function of estimating the situation in Chapter II, "Organization" section I, "The Estimate of the Situation." The significance of the *Small Wars Manual* is that the Marine Corps has viewed culture as a necessary information requirement within the planning process since the days of the small wars. The inclusion of information from the *Small Wars Manual* is not to put forth the notion that since the era of the small wars, that the Marine Corps has always "considered" culture in planning and conducting operations. The historical link to the *Small Wars Manual* is presented to draw attention to the fact that culture as it relates to planning operations is not a new concept, recently discovered in the conduct of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Additionally, and central to the argument of creating a separate warfighting function, is the fact that the *Small Wars Manual* documents the responsibility of this information requirement primarily to the F-2 element (intelligence) within the staff. Since the era of the small wars, the intelligence section within a staff has prepared culture-based information to facilitate the planning process. This culture-based information is important to the planning process, but equally important today to the planning process is the utilization of the operational culture model to further prepare the force for operations ashore.

Establishing a new warfighting function would be initiated through the MCCDC, which is responsible for doctrine development. As such, the entry point for initiating this would fall inside the Marine Corps Studies System. The Marine Corps Studies System's mission, based upon MCO 3902.1D is "The MCSS provides studies and analyses to ensure the Marine Corps has a greater understanding of issues and alternatives concerning organizations, tactics, doctrine, policies, force plans, strategies, procedures, intelligence, weapon selection, systems programs and resource allocations."²⁶ Having developed insight into the background of the Marine Corps

warfighting functions, the issue to resolve is whether the Marine Corps should or should not create a seventh warfighting function. When all factors are considered where Marines are charged to conduct combat operation in the various theaters around the globe, the current six warfighting functions' synergy in planning ensure Marines are able to perform the three basic principles as spoken by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kenneth Kurre "Marines are able to shoot, move, and communicate in order to assault through, whether in open terrain or an urban environment."²⁷ Through the documentation and analysis of the inherent capabilities, doctrinal shifts, emerging technology and the intelligence discipline's longstanding linkage to language and culture, the conclusion is that it is not necessary to segregate out language and culture as a separate function, even though there are positive aspects in creating a seventh warfighting function.

VI. Modeling of a seventh warfighting function

The recent shifts regarding language and culture across the Marine Corps have created an increased opportunity for Marines across the force to sharpen their language and cultural knowledge skills. The creation of a seventh warfighting function would ensure these recent shifts are imbued within the planning process for future Marines and achieve parity within the planning process relative to the existing six warfighting functions. The positive impact of creating a seventh warfighting function for language and culture within the Marine Corps would be a cadre of dedicated subject matter experts, titled Operational Culture Planners, to affect the planning process and subsequent execution across the Marine Corps operating forces. *Marine Corps Operations* articulates that "their effective application [warfighting functions], in concert with one another, will facilitate the planning and conduct of expeditionary operations."²⁸ Accounting for language and culture within the planning through the designation of Operational Culture

Planners would provide additional synergy to the subsequent plan from a language and culture perspective. In the current doctrine, language and culture are information attributes of the planning process that are considered, but do not necessarily generate vignettes of information that are required as inputs or outputs throughout the planning process. This additional warfighting function would develop information that would impact the necessary inputs and outputs throughout the six phases of the planning process, as do the six existing warfighting functions.

The potential target population within the Marine Corps is the Foreign Area Officer returning from an overseas assignment. The Foreign Area Officer already possesses a limited language capability and has spent focused time living abroad navigating a foreign culture. Although the Foreign Area Officer model is focused on the officer population within the Marine Corps, the Operational Culture Planner would require some level of support from the enlisted ranks. The assistance from the enlisted ranks would primarily be to assist the Operational Culture Planner in the query, discovery and collation of data to affect the planning process within the staff section. Ultimately, the Operational Culture Planner would provide focus and direction related to the five dimensions of operational culture across the planning process, from mission analysis (problem framing) through the transition phase, culminating in a distinct portion of the transition plan dedicated to operational culture impacts that may affect the various phases of a subsequent operation.

The recommended training development of Operational Culture Planners should be driven based upon the five operational culture dimensions of physical environment, economy, social structure, political structure and belief system.²⁹ The author is not advocating the development of planners to the level of social scientists or anthropologists within the Marine

Corps, but individuals who are focused on the cultural aspects inherent in all societies and how these cultural aspects may achieve positive results to develop recommendations to mitigate negative impacts across the operating environment. The training should focus on developing the mental acuity for the planner to be able to translate information gleaned from the five dimensions into operationally relevant planning considerations.

The Marine Corps would have dedicated personnel trained to assist the commander's decision making process as it relates to cultural impacts to operations. The Operational Culture Planner could be designated either through a primary or secondary military occupational specialty. A secondary designation, similar to the School of Advanced Warfighting graduate, would allow this cadre of subject matter experts to be easily identified within the Marine Corps personnel system, where additional expertise and manpower may be required during the planning process. The Operational Culture Planner would reside in a newly designated office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operational Culture at the Marine Expeditionary Force level of command. In addition to their primacy in the planning process, they would serve as a blending element within the planning process to ensure cultural considerations are factored across the remaining warfighting functions of intelligence, maneuver, force protection, fires, command and control and logistics.

The potential for this model to impact across the planning continuum could not be overstated. However, prior to adoption of the Operational Culture Planner model, an extensive study should be performed to ascertain the benefit of removing a slice of the operating forces' population to create Operational Culture Planners. The Operational Culture Planner model would create an inherent deficiency in the career fields where these Marines are originally assigned, if permanently assigned outside of their primary Military Occupational Specialty, as

Operational Culture Planners. In addition to ascertaining the benefit of taking from within the Marine Corps to create a language and culture warfighting function; this cadre of personnel would be limited in numbers, based upon the rotational assignment of the returning Foreign Area Officers. Additionally, the Operational Culture Planner career field would require a defined career path to ensure the Marine Corps recruits, assigns and maintains the best and brightest to serve as Operational Culture Planners, as well as their ability to be promoted along with their peers. Instead of creating a seventh warfighting function that creates a narrowly focused area of expertise within the operating forces, the author advocates developing “Culture Operators”³⁰ across the force through the implementation of regional Marine Expeditionary Forces.

VII. Creating Culture Operators Through Regional Marine Expeditionary Forces

The capabilities that have existed within the Marine Corps or have been created in the post 9-11 era have been effective in providing context to the planning process and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operation. Both MCIA and CAOCL have been able to provide capability and capacity to the force to increase the depth of knowledge regarding culture and language. Instead of creating a seventh warfighting function, the Marine Corps should imbue an operational culture mindset throughout the force, through the creation of regional MEFs, the use of existing technology and doctrinal shifts previously discussed. Holmes-Eber and Salmoni define Culture Operators as

“A warfighter who engages in military functions at the tactical, operational, and strategic level within his AO through continually re-reading the changing cultural and human aspects of the battlespace as they impact military operations; by tracking the dynamic interaction among the Operational Culture Dimensions...and by considering the impact of Marine operations as a new

physical condition of human existence for indigenous people in the AO, influencing local behaviors and attitudes”³¹

The sweeping doctrinal shifts the Marine Corps has implemented in the post 9-11 era have set the conditions to transition the force into Culture Operators. The Marine Corps has a standing historical imperative that every Marine is a rifleman and recently that every Marine is a source of intelligence information. Whether intentional or unintentional, the Marine Corps has set the conditions to add a new operational imperative: every Marine is a Culture Operator. The legacy of language and culture as it relates to the intelligence disciplines within the Marine Corps is longstanding. Intelligence Marines have and will continue to provide insight into the culture and language of countries where Marines are planning to deploy. Comparing the “Small Wars-era” Marine to the contemporary Marine, the basic mission of intelligence as it relates to the six warfighting functions has not changed from providing knowledge about the enemy or the surrounding environment needed to support decision-making.³² As such, the Marine Corps should continue with this precedent and imbue the concepts of what defines a Culture Operator across the force to affect planning and subsequent operations ashore.

Regional Marine Expeditionary Forces

To further the capabilities for Marines to build regional expertise and language skills for a particular region, the Marine Corps should ascertain the benefits of creating regional MEFs. A Marine assigned to II MEF may begin to build cultural expertise as well as a language capability for countries located within the II MEF area of responsibility, only to eventually be transferred to either III or I MEF in a future assignment. To truly build language and culturally savvy Marines, ready to respond to minimal advance warning operations, the Marine Corps should institute career assignments to one of the three MEFs and responsible Marine Force Headquarters

utilizing the accession process. Once a Marine completes the necessary training to achieve their military occupational specialty, they should be assigned to a MEF for their career. There are obvious exceptions to this assignment model relating to special duty assignments, necessary rotational assignments to the supporting establishment throughout the Marine Corps and external assignment responsibilities. Career MEF assignments would provide a stable environment for each individual Marine to develop relevant language and culture skills that will contribute to successful planning and subsequent operations tasked to their respective MEF. If Marines are to build and develop their skills for a region, it appears logical to keep the Marine assigned where those skills developed may be utilized to the greatest potential. In light of the proposed course of action to resolve the issue of a seventh warfighting function, there are still aspects within the current and potentially future doctrine, where there are areas of improvement to further the development of the planning process and Culture Operators across the force.

VIII. Recommendations for the Future

To further the planning process and subsequent execution of operations, the Marine Corps should implement new changes as well as continuing efforts to their current and future doctrine to enhance the planning and mission execution from a culture perspective. Based upon the current and future capacity and capabilities within the Marine Corps, and the projected future operating environment, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance culture throughout the Marine Corps and the Planning Process.

New efforts

Provide an update to the *Marine Corps Supplement to the DOD. Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* to include the definitions for culture and operational culture defined by Holmes-Eber and Salmoni in the publication *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles*

and Applications. By doing so, this will alleviate any confusion throughout the force of how the Marine Corps defines culture and operational culture related to planning and operations ashore.

Include *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* to the Marine Corps Professional Reading Program. Although the focus should be towards SNCOs and Officers, all ranks within the Marine Corps may benefit from this book.

The Regional Studies Program is designed to provide depth of knowledge of a particular region of the globe where a Marine may be assigned. However, if Marines are encouraged to develop a broad view of the operating forces, by serving in billets and duty stations throughout the Marine Corps, it seems counter-productive for a Marine to begin to build depth of a region, only to be re-assigned to a completely different region of the world on their next assignment. The Marine Corps should investigate the benefits of creating regional MEFs, as previously outlined to obtain the maximum benefit of the regional studies program as well as individual language training opportunities. The three MEFs have associated billet structure ranging from the tactical through operational level assignments at the Marine Force Headquarters with each Geographic Combatant Command where Marines are able to develop expertise in the various levels of planning and conducting operations.

To ensure that culture is accounted for within the planning process and to assist in transitioning culture to operational culture the Marine Corps Planning Process would require modifications. Current Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 5-1, Marine Corps Planning Process does not currently include a sufficient amount of insight or examples in its current form to truly impact planning from an operational culture perspective. Although still in draft format, the Marine Corps Planning Process desires to change the framework historically associated with Mission Analysis and modifying it to a framework of Problem Framing. Since

the Marine Corps is in the process of modifying its planning process, now may be an opportune time to further enhance this doctrinal publication.

The intent of MCWP 5-1 is to ensure enduring planning principles for future generations of Marines. As a result of the Marine Corps involvement in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Marines have developed a mindset regarding the planning process, in that Marines understand that language barriers and foreign culture are integral aspects of the planning process. This is attributed to recent combat experiences and not a result of the doctrinal publication. Modifying the publication at this point in history, will ensure the lessons learned by the contemporary Marine, will extend to the future Marine. To assist in creating a suitable planning knowledge base, the Marine Corps should create an appendix within the MCWP 5-1 to provide context for the important aspect to be considered regarding culture. Although not intended as a checklist, Marines will have an all inclusive document to assist their thought process before they commence a planning effort. A combination of the information provided in *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* and appropriate elements from MCIA's *C-GIRH* both provide an excellent source of information context to the planning process. Regarding Holmes-Eber and Salmoni's book, the author would recommend chapter 8, *From Models, to Dimensions to Observable Realities* as it provides an overview of the concept of operational culture, with case studies included. The benefit of chapter 8 relative to the planning process is the case studies provide examples of how a operational environment may be approached to achieve a positive outcome, as well as instances where an improper approach may instigate unintended consequences. Include from MCIA's *C-GIRH* two sections: *Values, Beliefs, and Cultural Narratives* and *Affiliations and Identity*. The inclusion of these sections from the C-

GIRH will provide a context to further assist in framing aspects of the potential problem from a culture perspective.

Continuing efforts

The current draft Marine Corps Planning Process publication has included language and culture as elements of *understanding the environment*; it appears that it doesn't necessarily provide enough clarity to assist the staff in framing the problem from the aspects of culture. The Marine Corps should continue to build upon the problem framing taxonomy to further decompose culture to document the context provided through Holmes-Eber and Salmoni five dimensions of operational culture and MCIA's C-GIRH. Potential items to include are: the dominant culture within the operating environment, tribal demographics, and hierarchical structure that may exist at the local level within the operating environment. This may assist the staff to begin to ascertain during the problem framing phase those elements within the cultural landscape that are either potential adversaries or allies. By further decomposing culture as an input into design phase, it may provide more fidelity to the outputs as it relates to subject matter expert shortfalls, assumptions, center of gravity analysis and resource shortfalls.

There are currently personnel from the Anthropology and Social Science communities serving side by side with Marines. As previously discussed under *Current Capability and Capacity within the Marine Corps*, the expertise provided has been invaluable to the Marine Corps and its operating forces. The willingness of personnel from this community to work side by side or with the military practically ceased to exist in the post-Vietnam era as described by Dr. Holmes-Eber.³³

The Marine Corps should continue to build a bridge into the anthropological community. As a large portion of the treatment is dedicated to culture, it is fitting to identify the fact that if a

culture is an ever changing aspect of a society, then there is room for the anthropology community's "culture" to shift over time. The Marine Corps' methods and tactical actions executed while engaged in war have changed over time. The Marine Corps does not conduct combat operations the same as in WWII and the Vietnam era. The Marine Corps has a compliment of personnel from the Anthropology and Social Sciences community working on its behalf. The boldness of those Anthropologist and Social Scientists that are willing to swim against the current represent an oil spot within their communities, which can only continue to spread. The author firmly believes that as the Anthropology and Social Sciences communities begins to recognize that the manner in which the military conducts war has changed, they will become more receptive to working with the military.

The current structure of the Marine Corps Planning Process requires a process of inputs and outputs to ensure the planning process is standard across the force. The fact that there are no existing inputs or outputs as it relates primarily to language and culture may set conditions for those considerations to possibly not receive the necessary attention within the planning process for future planners and operators. Problem framing is where the Marine Corps may garner the most benefit within the planning process, as this phase sets rhythm and tone for the remainder of the planning process. As such, the Marine Corps should include a short paragraph in the problem framing section that will provide more insight into the differences of cultural knowledge and framing the problem from an operational culture perspective.

IX. Conclusion

The Marine Corps will continue to find its operating forces engaged in operations around the globe where the operating environment will be complex and chaotic. The future operating environment will continue to be characterized by state and non-state actors, as well as the

indigenous population, of which the force will have to engage with on some level to achieve its strategic, operational and tactical objectives. The “Three Block War” concept will continue to remain a necessary mindset for Marines during the planning process, whether they are conducting humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations, or forcible entry from the sea.

Language and culture will remain at the forefront of achieving success in today and tomorrow’s operating environment. The Marine Corps has made great strides in ensuring that the operating forces have the doctrine, tactics, techniques, procedures and tools available to remain relevant as our nations force in readiness to continue as a premier extension of the nation’s political will. The documentation and implementation of the *Training & Readiness Manual for Language and Culture* is and will remain a cornerstone block within our operating forces for preparing the current and future Marine for a complex and chaotic operating environment. The efforts executed by the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning will continue to provide critical training to the force during pre-deployment training to ensure Marines have an opportunity to sharpen their minds in developing the knowledge and understanding of the impacts of language and culture across the full spectrum of warfare required by the amphibious force. The Marine Corps’ service intelligence center’s persistence in providing timely and relevant cultural intelligence to Marines deployed around the globe and those preparing to deploy will ensure Marines have relevant culture based materials at the ready, as they move to the next objective. The distant learning provided through the Marine Corps’ Training and Education Command regarding language and the regional studies program for the individual Marine, through online technology will enable the force to initiate and build upon their language and cultural understanding for the regions of the world where they may deploy.

To continue to evolve into a force that embodies the enduring words of General Mattis “First, do no harm” the Marine Corps leadership structure, operators and planners alike will need to be imbued with a culture operator mindset to further enhance their ability to decompose the operational considerations associated with the operational culture model, as it applies to the Marine Corps Planning Process, to extend their intellect and understanding beyond the myriad of static representations of language and culture represented across the range of encyclopedic information available. The Marine Corps’ planning efforts will need to continue to seek the “so what” from culture during the phases of the planning process and more importantly during the execution of operations, where the people matter most.

The Marine Corps must continue to build the bridge back into the Anthropology discipline to leverage the vast knowledge, skills and abilities of that community of expertise. The Cultural Anthropologist community is a priceless body of expertise that has and will continue to prove invaluable to Marine Corps operators and planners. Whether that expertise is delivered through our Professional Military Education centers or on staff across the Marine Corps, the anthropologist’s expertise will continue to enable the operating forces to “first, do no harm.”

The manner in which our operators and planners frame the problem will have a direct correlation on the stone that is cast upon the smooth water’s surface and the associated rippling affect across the cultural landscape where operations are conducted. This treatment on language and culture as a seventh warfighting function will hopefully continue to invoke thought, rigorous debate and continue to evolve the doctrine and core competencies of the Marine Corps. To the current and future operators and planners within the Marine Corps: Plan with rigor, intellect and understanding of the human environment and its potential to impact Marine Corps operations around the globe.

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- ¹ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 5: Planning*, (Quantico, VA 1997). Available: www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/mcdp5.pdf. Pg 4
- ² General C. C. Krulak, *The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War*, (Quantico, VA, 1999).
- ³ Ibid
- ⁴ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Vision & Strategy 2025*, (Arlington, VA, 2008) General J. T. Conway's foreword. Cited hereafter as Vision & Strategy.
- ⁵ General J. N. Mattis in Paula Holmes-Eber and Barack A. Salmoni, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), pg vii.
- ⁶ William D. Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Institutes Press) pp 10-11
- ⁷ Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness, pg 11
- ⁸ Ibid, pg 26
- ⁹ Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, pg 36
- ¹⁰ Colonel Henri Bore', *Complex Operations in Africa: Operational Culture Training in the French Military*, United States Army Military Review, Combined Arms Center-Knowledge. Available: http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20090430_art011.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2009) pg 65
- ¹¹ Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, pg 44.
- ¹² Ibid, 44
- ¹³ The term encyclopedic used in this paper equates to historical information. This term is used within the intelligence community, to categorize the types of information which might be found in an encyclopedia.
- ¹⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations, (Arlington, VA 2008). Available: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf (Accessed January 19, 2010)
- ¹⁵ United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Long Range Threat Assessment (DOD-1586-WWW-004-09), Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, (Quantico, VA 2008)
- ¹⁶ Long Range Threat Assessment, pg 7
- ¹⁷ United States Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment: Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force*, (Suffolk, VA 2008), Available: <http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2008/JOE2008.pdf> (Accessed October 15, 2009)
- ¹⁸ Ibid, pg 7 and Colonel Jeff Remington, Commander Ron Henderson, Sub-Saharan Africa: A Focused Strategy for U.S. Policy, National Defense University, National War College (Washington, D. C. 1998) Language and ethnic groups' information was extracted from the latter. Available: <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA441965> (Accessed January 17, 2010).
- ¹⁹ Long Range Threat Assessment, pp 20, 21. Disaster Relief was added to Humanitarian Assistance potential role or mission, as these two operations are normally conducted together.
- ²⁰ United States Marine Corps, Cultural Generic Information Requirements Handbook , (DOD-GIRH-2634-001-08), Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, (Quantico, VA, 2008), pg 2
- ²¹ Cultural Generic Information Requirements Handbook, pg 2
- ²² United States Marine Corps, *NAVMC 3500.65: Operational Culture and Language Training and Readiness Manual*, (Quantico, VA 2009)

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- ²³ In the context of the Marine Corps, homesteading is a term that refers to personnel that remain at one duty location or within one geographical area over an extended period of time. A normal rotation patterns for Marines is three to four years.
- ²⁴ United States Marine Corps, MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, (Quantico, VA 1997), pg 76
- ²⁵ General Alfred M. Gray's written response to author on February 25, 2010 based upon a letter written to General Gray on February 3, 12010. The letter from the author was to seek insight into how the Marine Corps adopted the current six warfighting functions.
- ²⁶ United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Order 3902.1D: Marine Corps Studies System. Available: <http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Pages/MCO%203902.1C.aspx> (accessed January 19, 2010)
- ²⁷ Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kenneth Kurre, *1/2 Marines shoot, move, communicate back to the basics* (Camp Lejeune, NC), Available: http://www.iimefpublic.usmc.mil/_852571150047CCBC.nsf/rssNews/87110FD638774D908525743D00624106?OpenDocument (accessed January 18, 2010)
- ²⁸ United States Marine Corps, MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, (Quantico, VA 2001).
- ²⁹ Holmes-Eber and Salmoni. Pg iv-v
- ³⁰ Holmes-Eber and Salmoni. Pg 43-48
- ³¹ Holmes-Eber and Salmoni. Pg 46
- ³² United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Supplement to the DOD. Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* Available: <http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Pages/Publications97.aspx> (accessed January 19, 2010)
- ³³ National Public Radio. Kelly, Mary L. *In Class, Marines Learn Cultural Cost of Conflict*. January 12, 2009. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122362543> (accessed January 12, 2009).

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